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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**EXHIBITION EXPLORES PAUL STRAND'S MODERNIST VISION
AND ITS IMPACT ON AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHY
Part of the Getty's *American Visions* Series**

***Three Roads Taken: The Photographs of Paul Strand*
At the Getty Center, May 10–September 4, 2005**

"Three important roads opened for me...My work grew out of a response, first, to trying to understand the new developments in painting; second, a desire to express certain feelings I had about New York where I lived; third...I wanted to see if I could photograph people without their being aware of the camera." — Paul Strand

LOS ANGELES—One of the country's most profound photographers, Paul Strand (1890–1976) developed a modernist aesthetic that revealed itself in over half a century's work with the camera, shaping the development of American photography. The power and impact of his creations are explored in the new exhibition ***Three Roads Taken: The Photographs of Paul Strand***, on view at the Getty Center, May 10–September 4, 2005.

The exhibition features approximately 75 of the 186 Strand prints in the Getty Museum's collection. The works on view trace the development of Strand's aesthetic as he sought to express the principles of modern art through photography, convey a sense of place, and create truthful portraits of people. The exhibition will present these three approaches in a chronological survey of the photographer's work, and will include a continuous screening of Strand's experimental and influential short film *Manhatta*, made in 1920 and considered the first avant-garde film in America. ***Three Roads Taken*** is sponsored by Merrill Lynch.

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"We are delighted that Merrill Lynch, who was the inaugural sponsor in the new corporate program we launched last year, has returned to support another exhibition at the Getty Center," says William Griswold, acting director and chief curator of the J. Paul Getty Museum. "We are grateful for their partnership, which will enhance our presentation of this insightful look at Paul Strand's place in the history of American photography."

"We are proud to extend our association with the Getty, and to continue our enthusiastic support for their work in bringing important exhibitions to the public," says Gregory Mech, Regional Managing Director of Merrill Lynch Global Private Client Group in Southern California. "We share a firm belief that the arts can expand horizons and bring joy into everyday life."

Three Roads Taken is part of *American Visions*, a sequence of four exhibitions featuring works by some of the country's preeminent practitioners drawn from the Getty Museum's renowned photographs collection. Together, the exhibitions offer insight into 75 years of photographic innovation, exploring the medium's versatility as a new creative language used to document reality and as a means for artistic expression. ***Three Roads Taken*** will be on view concurrently with *The Photographs of Frederick Sommer: A Centennial Tribute*, offering a rare opportunity to explore and contrast the almost parallel growth of two very different creative sensibilities. In September, *American Visions* will focus on photojournalism with *Scene of the Crime: Photo by Weegee* and *Pictures for the Press*, featuring sometimes sensational tabloid pictures by the great crime photographer Weegee and memorable news images recording key events in American history from the 1940s to the 1970s.

Paul Strand's work reflects a particular moment in the history of photography, when a modernist vision was explored, defined, and celebrated. He saw the medium as an expressive fine art, taking inspiration, in particular, from Cézanne's landscape paintings, which he admired for their ability to unite depth and space. Strand paid careful attention to the structure of his own compositions and the interaction of key elements in his images by exploiting line, shape, and mass. In his still lifes, Strand uses light and shadow to define near-abstract arrangements of shapes and forms. And although more documentary in nature, his portraits and cityscapes, particularly those

of New York City, are as equally composed. With its nontraditional perspective and elongated format, one image titled *City Hall Park, New York* captures the vitality of the modern metropolis while evoking Japanese scrolls.

Strand's interest in expressing the truth was guided by his search for a sense of humanism in his subjects—something he referred to as the “essential character” of a person. Early in his career, he strove to achieve this by using a camera fitted with a false lens that would allow him to create portraits of people without them being aware of it.

The exhibition includes a continuous screening of Strand's influential short film *Manhatta*, made in 1920 with fellow American photographer Charles Sheeler (1883–1965). The film attempts to capture the spirit of New York in seven minutes, tracing a day in the life of the city, beginning with the arrival of the Staten Island Ferry and ending with a sunset on the Hudson River. The sequences in *Manhatta* display a similar approach to the still photographic work of both Strand and Sheeler, with extreme camera angles used to capture the dynamic character of the city.

Biography

Born in New York in 1890, Paul Strand received his first camera, a Kodak Brownie, when he was 12. He attended the Ethical Culture School in New York from 1907–1909, which shaped Strand's outlook with its humanist emphasis on creative, critical, and pragmatic approaches to learning. It was here that Strand met and studied with Lewis Hine, whose powerful images of child labor helped guide Strand's social ideals.

As a young man, Strand was exposed to modern European art at the 1913 Armory Show and at Alfred Stieglitz's “291” Gallery, where works of art by Cézanne, Matisse, Picasso, and Duchamp were on display for the first time in America. Strand took inspiration from the modernist movement and, in turn, explored its ideas and themes in his photography.

After serving in the army during World War II, Strand experimented with filmmaking, which he practiced in the 1920s through the 1930s. A founding member of Frontier Films, a New York documentary film cooperative, and a director of the

Photo League, which was dedicated to social photography in the United States, Strand's affiliation with both organizations reflected his growing involvement with leftist politics. Finding the political climate inhospitable with the rise of McCarthyism, Strand left the U.S. in 1950 to permanently settle in France, where he worked until his death on March 31, 1976. Throughout his career, Strand applied elements of modernism, realism, and portraiture to all of his works, making for an interesting and diverse body of work that reflects the three roads taken.

RELATED EXHIBITION

The Photographs of Frederick Sommer: A Centennial Tribute

May 10–September 4, 2005

Frederick Sommer (American, born Italy, 1905–1999) is one of the most venerated and influential American photographers of the 20th century. His work reflects a philosophical and radical streak combined with a Surrealist sensibility that expanded the conventional definitions of the medium. Initially trained in drawing and landscape architecture, Sommer strove for cross-fertilization among drawing, sculpture, music, philosophy, and photography. The exhibition displays a selection of 37 innovative works from Sommer's 60-year career drawn from the Getty Museum's collection.

RELATED EVENTS AND PUBLICATIONS

All events are free and are held in the Harold M. Williams Auditorium, unless otherwise noted. Seating reservations are required. For reservations and information, please call 310-440-7300 or visit www.getty.edu. Tickets are available on-site or by phone.

GALLERY COURSE

Paul Strand: From Stieglitz to Scotland

May 19 and 26, 10:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m., Museum galleries and studios

Anne Lyden, associate curator of photographs, the J. Paul Getty Museum, leads this two-session gallery course. It explores the development of Paul Strand's aesthetic, from his early pictorial landscapes of New York in 1914 to the straight portraits from Scotland in 1954, while considering the key individuals—most notably Alfred Stieglitz—and major movements in art history that influenced him. Course fee \$20. Limited to 25 participants. Reservations available beginning Thursday, April 28 at 9:00 a.m.

LECTURES

Paul Strand: Transforming the Ordinary

Sunday, July 24, 4:00 p.m.

Eminent photographic historian and author Naomi Rosenblum, whose works include *A World History of Photography* and *A History of Women Photographers*, discusses the

nature of Paul Strand's vision and how it evolved from early Pictorialist beginnings to incorporate modernist aesthetic ideas and non-conformist social convictions.

POINT-OF-VIEW TALKS

Friday, May 27, 6:00 and 7:30 p.m. Museum galleries

Hunter Drohojowska-Philp, art critic, journalist, and author of *Full Bloom: The Art and Life of Georgia O'Keeffe*, leads a discussion on the exhibition. Before her life with Alfred Stieglitz began, Georgia O'Keeffe was infatuated with the photographs and the person of Paul Strand. This talk explores how the mutual admiration of O'Keeffe and Paul Strand affected the development of their art. Complements the exhibition *Three Roads Taken: The Photographs of Paul Strand*. Sign up at the Museum Information Desk beginning at 4:30 p.m. the day of the talks.

RELATED PUBLICATION

In Focus: Paul Strand

Photographs from the J. Paul Getty Museum

Anne M. Lyden

Featuring significant examples of Strand's far-reaching and powerful work from a 40-year period, this newest addition to the In Focus series is a perfect accompaniment to the current exhibition *Three Roads Taken: The Photographs of Paul Strand*. Available in the Getty Bookstore, by calling 800-223-3431 or 310-440-7059, or online at www.getty.edu.

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Note to editors: Images available on request.

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The J. Paul Getty Trust is an international cultural and philanthropic institution devoted to the visual arts that includes the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Research Institute, the Getty Conservation Institute, and the Getty Foundation. The J. Paul Getty Trust and its programs are based at the Getty Center in Los Angeles.

Visiting the Getty Center:

The Getty Center is open Tuesday through Thursday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. It is closed Mondays and major holidays. Admission to the Getty Center is always free. Parking is available for \$7; no reservation required. Reservations are required for event seating and groups of 15 or more. Please call 310-440-7300 (English or Spanish) for reservations and information. The TTY line for callers who are deaf or hearing impaired is 310-440-7305.

Additional information is available on the Getty Web site at www.getty.edu.